

VZCZCXRO0984  
OO RUEHIK  
DE RUEHTA #2160/01 3530315  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 190315Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7009  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE 2257  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1620  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2321  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 1255  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2923  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 1815  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 1665  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2628

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 002160

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR S, D, P, SCA/CEN, INR/B, EUR/RPM, DRL  
STATE PLEASE PASS TO USAID

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [KNNP](#) [SOCI](#) [OSCE](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: DFM UMAROV DETAILS HIS DISSIDENT PAST TO A/S  
BLAKE

ASTANA 00002160 001.2 OF 002

1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

2. (SBU) SUMMARY: A/S Robert Blake concluded his successful three-day visit to Kazakhstan with an elegant but relaxed dinner hosted by Deputy Foreign Minister Kairat Umarov on December 15. Umarov revealed in great detail his personal journey from Soviet anti-nuclear dissident in the 1980s to senior diplomat today. Umarov explained why he believes the opposition plays an important role in society and expressed hope for strengthened high-level contacts. Blake and Umarov pledged to work through the tough issues on our bilateral agenda. It is remarkable that Umarov was so open in front of the most junior officers from his Foreign Ministry's Americas Desk, and indicates where Kazakhstan could go in its democratic evolution. This kind of "hospitality evening" is essential for building trust and will pay dividends as Blake and Umarov lead our Annual Bilateral Consultations. END SUMMARY.

SOVIET-ERA ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT SHAPED UMAROV

3. (SBU) Umarov warmly welcomed Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake and the other U.S. guests to his elegant table in a private room at the Rixos hotel. After initial pleasantries, Umarov began a long meditation on his evolution from Soviet-era anti-nuclear dissident to senior international diplomat. He said that he was inspired to join the anti-nuclear movement in the dying days of the USSR because of the genuine outpouring of popular anguish over increased deformities in children and contamination in livestock and products from the 465 nuclear tests that the Soviet Union had conducted near Semipalatinsk on the territory of what became independent Kazakhstan. Umarov said he supported the Semei-Nevada International Anti-Nuclear Movement, founded by the Kazakhstani activist and poet (now Kazakhstan's ambassador to UNESCO) Olzhas Suleimenov. He added that the Semei-Nevada movement is where he developed his respect for the opposition. "We need them to hold us accountable and sharpen our minds."

LINGUISTIC SKILLS CREATE A DIPLOMAT

14. (SBU) By 1996 Umarov had become a trade unionist, but his intellectual talents and excellent English-language skills brought him to the attention of Kanat Saudabayev, then head of the fledgling nation's consular service. According to Umarov, Kazakhstan had no embassies at that time, but he accepted Saudabayev's offer to join the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as its 18th officer. In those early days Umarov sometimes served as President Nazarbayev's translator, and Nazarbayev, taking a shine to the young man, told him about the weight of responsibility he felt in taking the uncertain nation into its independence. Nazarbayev told Umarov that he wanted Kazakhstan to be known not just for its leadership on nuclear weapons -- after all they had not chosen for the weapons to be in the country -- but for its economic and social progress. In the face of staunch opposition from "red directors" and a "red parliament" to his proposed reforms, Nazarbayev had the constitution amended to permit more private investment, and for that, Umarov gave him real credit.

#### PRAISE FOR SECRETARY CLINTON - PAST AND PRESENT

15. (SBU) Throughout the evening, Umarov returned to praise the United States and its role in Kazakhstan's evolution. State Secretary-Foreign Minister Saudabayev expressed appreciation for the Secretary's Independence Day message, and Umarov's staff wanted to make sure we received Saudabayev's letter of appreciation to Secretary Clinton (NOTE: Pouched to the Department. END NOTE). Umarov praised former U.S. Ambassadors Elizabeth Jones and Larry Napper, who had pressed to move the U.S. Embassy to Astana, Kazakhstan's new diplomatic capital, noting that many other countries had dragged their feet on this controversial move.

16. (SBU) On a more personal note, Umarov warmly remembered his first contacts with Hillary Clinton during her 1996 visit to

ASTANA 00002160 002.2 OF 002

Kazakhstan as America's First Lady. Umarov had served as the interpreter during Mrs. Clinton's tour of the Almaty museum. He was impressed with her genuine interest in Abai Kunanbayev (Qunanbayuli), Kazakhstan's great intellectual hero, known as "Abai." Umarov was doubly impressed when the next day the First Lady repeated some of the guide's words about Abai in her public comments. Umarov said he became a fan forever when he received U.S. Presidential cuff links from the First Lady, which he still cherishes. Umarov was especially pleased when Blake said that shortly after his swearing in, he had suggested to Secretary Clinton that she read "Apples are From Kazakhstan," the travelogue that offers an insightful picture of the country's historical, political, and cultural landscape. Blake noted, to Umarov's delight, that the Secretary had praised it and recommended it to those around her, including her senior staff and her spouse.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: "Hospitality dinners" are essential in this political culture, because that is where the trust is forged to solve problems and achieve results. Umarov is one of Kazakhstan's best up-and-coming diplomats, and he skillfully used the dinner to build the personal relationships that are key to advancing Kazakhstan's agenda and our interests, and that will pay off when he and Blake lead our Annual Bilateral Consultations. He highlighted his government's key themes: the desire for high-level engagement with the United States, more recognition of its non-proliferation legacy, the historical role of civil society even in pre-independence Kazakhstan, and the intellectual and social mobility that exists in this intriguing society. The warm tone of the evening and the several toasts -- to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, to her possible visit, to Kazakhstan's independence, and to the "free people of Kazakhstan" -- showed the government's earnest desire to strengthen its strategic partnership with the United States in every forum and at every level. Equally intriguing to us was Umarov laying out his personal history and praising the constructive role of the opposition before the members of the MFA's Americas Desk, including its most junior officers. END COMMENT.

18. (SBU) A/S Blake has cleared this cable.

HOAGLAND